

4/21/72

Dear Walter,

The new friend of whom I spoke was here last weekend. I do not know whether he has been in touch with you or will be. I gave him your name and phone and another.

He spent a year as a reporter before going into p.r.

I guess I kind of surprised him by asking nothing about him. Finally he asked me if I wanted to know anything about him. "Ope. So, he volunteered this and a few other things. I guess he found it hard to understand that when he told me he is a writer when we met I assumed he told me the truth. And I suppose he is also surprised that I have given him the entire file without any agreement, leaving it entirely up to him and telling him that if it is his desire, the entire property is his.

He sees the story as I do, which I like (and I hope we are both right!). He thinks it can make a beautiful and significant story. I think he'll probably use the title I have had in mind or a similar one.

Included in what I let him have is all the background material he should need on the racial/cultural history, a fairly complete historical story of "sin" there.

There is one separate file I've mislaid or loaned and not gotten back. It is enough for a chapter he thinks, as I do, not extraneous, the revolts in the New Orleans jail and the conditions there. Attica becomes Camelot. There is the sad story of a white Washington college student falsely arrested by the city police and put in the parish jail. Several times prisoners set the jail afire, preferring that risk to living there under existing conditions and in an effort to attract attention to those conditions. But the city has gone, instead of that and other needs, for the world's largest, finest and newest domed stadium. If I can't find someone who has these clippings, I have good relations with the librarian of the N.O. papers and I am certain he will grant access to the morgue. There is a great picture of which I have given Rick a copy (xerox). Some joker put up a sign at the largest street near the jail. It read, "Caution! Escaped Prisoners' Crossing." And there is a big of doggerel about it, too.

So, we'll see what Rick does with "Desire", the subtitle to be something like Revolt of Black New Orleans.

I'll be interest in how he handles the Jane Fonda angle. Her companion was not quite the advertised sleuth, for she rented three cars at the same place in her own name and all three carloads were busted.

Aside from the jail file, he has it all. He phoned me night before last to say he has read what he had't read here and is at work on it. That's the part I like best!

In our brief discussion of black literature, I found appropriate to the approach to this writing his liking of Sam Greenlee's Spook Who Sat By the Door. I didn't tell him that, for the writing should be as he feels it. But the way Greenlee handled Spook would be great, I think.

My one concern at the moment is a fear that he was too impressed with me as we chatted about the past. My concern is that it may influence him too much, that without intending he may copy, may without realizing it surrender some of his independence. That I do not intend....We'll see.

Not one of the books has come, but don't let that trouble you. Today there are all kinds of gremlins, including new ones.

Hope you are all well,